

Stateline Midwest

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MLC Annual Meeting Edition

THE MIDWESTERN OFFICE OF THE COUNCIL OF STATE GOVERNMENTS

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Future of work in Midwest

Wheelan: To reinvent economies, states must refocus policies to address gap in skills rather than loss of jobs

by Tim Anderson (tanderson@csg.org)

The Midwest, Charles Wheelan said during remarks to the region's state lawmakers this summer, was "organized brilliantly" for success in the 20th century.

Clean water.

Fertile agricultural land.

Natural resources to meet its, and the world's, manufacturing and energy needs.

A first-rate education system.

They are all still invaluable strengths, but Wheelan said the Midwest's success in this century's global economy depends on an asset that is less of a sure thing and more reliant on policy intervention — the skills of its people.

"What other region in the world has greater economic potential?" he asked.

His answer: None. Other parts of the world face some mix of formidable monetary, political, demographic and poverty challenges, and even within this country, no region can match the Midwest's advantages.

But how can the region meet its economic potential? That was the focus of a presentation by Wheelan to the Midwestern Legislative Conference that kicked off a four-day meeting centered on the theme of "Economic Reinvention."

"Our focus has got to be more on skills," said Wheelan, an economics professor and former Midwest correspondent for *The Economist*.

"We talk a lot about jobs, but from an economic standpoint, if we take care of the skills, the jobs will always take care of themselves."

He urged lawmakers to stop their focus on trying to bring back jobs of the past that have been lost due to technology, trade, immigration, outsourcing and offshoring.

The more important question for states to address, he said, is this: "What is it that consumers around the world want, and are we poised to deliver that?"

Policies built around that question would focus less on short-term jobs strategies and more on long-term plans in areas such as infrastructure development, job training and education reform.

Thank you to MLC meeting participants and contributors

The Midwestern Office of The Council of State Governments would like to thank the legislators and contributors who made the 2012 MLC Annual Meeting in Cleveland a success.

Ohio House Minority Leader Armond Budish, chair of the Midwestern Legislative Conference, and his colleagues in the Ohio General Assembly helped lead planning efforts for the four-day event, which took place in July.

This edition of *Stateline Midwest* highlights some of the policy sessions and MLC committee meetings held during the conference, as well as some of the actions taken by the region's legislators.

More information on the meeting, including photos and speaker presentations, is available at www.csgmidwest.org.



"We talk a lot about jobs, but from an economic standpoint, if we take care of the skills, the jobs will always take care of themselves."

Charles Wheelan

Job one for states, he believes, is to cultivate and retain a highly skilled workforce — entrepreneurs who create new products and workers able to fill positions in growing sectors such as information technology, health care, precision manufacturing and specialized food products.

According to Wheelan, the same global factors driving down wages for low-skilled, less-educated workers — and eliminating these workers' jobs altogether — provide the Midwest with a chance to reinvent itself.

"It's just a question of supply and demand," he said. "The supply of low-skilled workers has skyrocketed in the global economy. At the same time, the rise in pur-

chasing power of people in those countries has provided new opportunities."

Wheelan concluded his talk with six strategies to tap into those opportunities, including five that relate directly to the work of legislatures. (The sixth was changing the dynamic in labor-management relations.)

"They scream out as ways to improve the economic climate and foster jobs growth," he said.

1) Develop human capital, from cradle to grave

Developing the skills of a state, regional or national workforce should begin with

► PLEASE TURN TO PAGE 5



The theme of this year's Midwestern Legislative Conference Annual Meeting was "Economic Reinvention," and the July event's opening keynote speaker was noted economics writer and professor Charles Wheelan. He urged lawmakers to focus more on building the skills of state workforces and less on trying to recapture the lost jobs of the 20th century.

In July, the five policy committees of the Midwestern Legislative Conference held meetings on the first day of the MLC Annual Meeting in Cleveland. This month's Issue Briefs section summarizes some of the policy issues discussed at the MLC Agriculture & Natural Resources, Economic Development, Energy, Health & Human Services, and Midwest-Canada Relations committee meetings.

Health & Human Services

Removing barriers to coordinated care seen as key to better patient outcomes, lower health costs

At July's annual meeting of the MLC Health and Human Services Committee, legislators discussed options for building health care systems that are more efficient — with the goals of trimming costs and improving patient outcomes.

One of the themes discussed by policymakers was "integrated delivery systems" — medical groups made up of hospitals, labs, pharmacies and other facilities. The goal of these systems is to allow patients to get all their medical care from a group of associated providers that share information and coordinate care.

One way these systems can reduce costs is by reducing duplicative care, because providers that are in regular communication can share past test results. This communication is crucial for physicians and nurses to avoid errors and provide more-appropriate care — especially in urgent situations, according to a panel of experts that spoke at the conference.

"In the absence of information, you make the best decision you can, but it's not optimal," said Dr. Ronald Copeland, president and executive medical director of Ohio Permanente, a managed-care organization. Copeland, who is also a practicing surgeon,

shared lessons learned from Kaiser's approach, which is similar to the concept of medical homes.

Later, Marie Maes-Voreis spoke about the Minnesota Medical Homes Initiative, which was launched as part of the state's 2008 health care reform legislation.

Under the program, the state certifies medical providers to become medical homes. These primary-care physicians and clinics can then receive "care coordination" payments from insurers based on the complexity of a patient's needs. Providers can bill insurers more to treat patients with multiple chronic conditions, mental health issues or a language barrier.

Providers typically use these payments to hire staff to follow up with patients to see how they are managing a diagnosis, as well as to more closely monitor their care and coordinate procedures, tests, and education such as nutrition counseling. Preliminary studies show that this approach can reduce costs and improve treatment of chronic diseases by flagging and addressing problems before they become serious, according

to the experts on the panel.

As of July, about 25 percent of Minnesota's primary care clinics were certified medical homes, with such facilities serving 2 million patients in the state.

Health care homes are one of many approaches being used by states and health care systems to break down "silos," or separations between provider sectors, according to Mike Stanek, a policy analyst with the National Academy for State Health Policy.

Information systems, including electronic medical records, can also assist providers in sharing information, measuring outcomes and allowing patients to access their information from anywhere. States are also considering

"prepayment" or "capitated payment" initiatives in which physicians are paid set amounts for handling all of a patient's care, no matter how many visits they make. Minnesota, for example, is allowing physicians to charge for "baskets of care" — one-time payments to handle a patient's chronic condition, such as depression or diabetes.



South Dakota Sen. Jean Hunhoff and Illinois Sen. Mattie Hunter, co-chairs of the MLC Health and Human Services Committee, participate in a discussion at the committee's meeting last month.

Brief written by Kate Tormey, staff liaison for the Midwestern Legislative Conference Health & Human Services Committee. She can be reached at ktormey@csg.org. The committee's co-chairs are Illinois Sen. Mattie Hunter and South Dakota Sen. Jean Hunhoff.

Economic Development

New MLC-led network would pursue regional collaboration among Midwest's states

Can the Midwestern states collaborate to more effectively compete in the national and global economy?

This question, which has been at the center of the work of the Midwestern Legislative Conference's Economic Development Committee for the past two years, was explored further during the committee's July meeting.

The committee enlisted the help of a panel of experts who offered insights and advice on a number of questions and concerns involving collaborative approaches

to economic development. Those included: What can collaboration look like? What is needed for collaboration to succeed? What are the potential obstacles to collaboration, and how can they be overcome?

As a result of this inquiry, the committee recommended that the MLC make the creation of a regional economic development network a priority in its future work. The MLC Executive Committee will consider the recommendation at its next meeting.

Specifically, the network would include various regional stakeholders: legislators, executive branch officials, economic development professionals, members of the private sector, and leaders and policy experts from universities and nonprofit organizations.

This group would then explore strategies for regional economic development, concentrating solely on strengthening competitiveness of the Midwest as a region.

The committee recognizes that there will always be some level of short-term competition among states regarding job and business attraction.

However, it believes the future prosperity of the region could depend on collaborative approaches in areas that help all of the Midwestern states gain more in the long term.

The committee's discussion outlined some of the initial steps that the network should address in advancing a collaborative agenda:

- bringing together all stakeholders who have an interest in the economic success of the region;
- defining and creating a framework and shared vision of the common goals and interests of the region's economic future;
- developing data-driven evidence of the competitive advantages that exist within the region and the benefits of collaboration;
- identifying those areas, such as innovation and trade, within which states can collaborate;
- educating and engaging a wide array of policymakers in the discussion; and
- learning how effective local regional collaborations have been structured.

Among the next steps in this process would be completion of a concept paper, written by economic development experts from across the region, that would outline the need for, and advantages of, collaboration.

Brief written by Laura Tomaka, CSG Midwest staff liaison for the Midwestern Legislative Conference Economic Development Committee. She can be reached at ltomaka@csg.org. The committee's co-chairs are Ohio Rep. Ted Celeste and South Dakota Sen. Mike Vehle.



Ohio Rep. Ted Celeste and South Dakota Sen. Mike Vehle, co-chairs of the MLC Economic Development Committee, lead a session at the group's July meeting.

Energy/Midwest-Canada Relations

Energy interdependence between U.S., Canada will play major role in both countries' future

Canada is the largest supplier of energy to the United States, providing 9 percent of this country's energy needs — more than Saudi Arabia and Venezuela combined. These statistics, and other information related to bilateral energy trade, were the focus of a joint meeting this summer of the MLC's Energy and Midwest-Canada Relations committees.

Iowa Rep. Chuck Soderberg, co-chair of the Energy Committee, opened the session by noting the integrated nature of the U.S.-Canada energy relationship — with energy resources moving to and from each country (much more so from Canada to the U.S.).

This is especially true of the interconnected North American electricity grid, which delivers power to nearly all of Canada, the United States and part of Baja California in northern Mexico. (While Canada supplies just 1 percent of total U.S. electricity needs, the percentage is much higher in some states: 10 percent in Minnesota and 6 percent in Michigan, for example.)

Canada's energy exports to U.S., 2010	
Energy source	% of U.S. market
Crude oil and products	20%
Electricity	1%
Natural gas	14%
Uranium	22%

Source: Government of Canada

In place of true energy independence — a goal many nations may find impossible to achieve due to the uneven distribution of natural resources around the globe — is the idea of energy interdependence.

Steve Brick, a senior fellow on energy and climate with the Chicago Council on Global Affairs, noted that the U.S.-Canada interrelationship allows both countries to buy and sell energy to secure democratic allies.

But Brick said energy interdependence also stresses the importance of energy choices and use on health and the environment — questions that have arisen lately over the proposed Keystone XL pipeline that would increase U.S. use of Canada's oil sands.

The two types of oil sands recovery impact both land and water use, and also raise questions about global climate change.

Dale Eisler, an official with Natural Resources Canada, said oil from the sands has a greenhouse gas intensity that is between 5 percent and 15 percent higher than the average crude oil consumed in the United States. As a result, many environmental groups and some policymakers oppose increased U.S. use of this energy resource.



Guest speaker Steve Brick of the Chicago Council on Global Affairs (center) discusses the idea of energy interdependence during last month's joint meeting of the MLC Energy and Midwest-Canada Relations committees. Looking on are Iowa Rep. Chuck Soderberg (left), co-chair of the Energy Committee, and Kansas Sen. Ray Merrick, co-chair of the Midwest-

Looking toward the future, John Kerekes of the American Petroleum Institute told the committees that the United States will require 10 percent more energy in 2035 than it does now, and that oil and gas will likely make up more than half of the fuel mix (with coal, biomass and renewables, nuclear and hydroelectric making up the rest).

U.S. production of oil and gas can help meet those needs, he said, partly through technological advances that allow oil and gas from shale to be used.

Brief written by Ilene Grossman, CSG Midwest staff liaison to the Midwestern Legislative Conference Midwest-Canada Relations and Energy committees. She can be reached at igrossman@csg.org. The Midwest-Canada Relations Committee's co-chairs are Kansas Sen. Ray Merrick and Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly Member Wayne Elhard, and the Energy Committee's co-chairs are Nebraska Sen. Deb Fischer and Iowa Rep. Chuck Soderberg.

Agriculture & Natural Resources

Sound science should underlie policy decisions, lawmakers urge

When the Midwestern Legislative Conference Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee met in July, much of the discussion — and ultimately the passing of a resolution — focused on the importance of basing policy decisions on sound scientific data.

"If legislators use peer-reviewed scientific data as our guiding principles, then policy will be based on reasoned and justifiable information, not emotion or rhetoric," said North Dakota Sen. Tim Flakoll, one of the committee's co-chairs. "Resulting legislation would be more consistent and justifiable."

Dr. Christine Hoang, a director with the American Veterinary Medical Association, spoke to the committee specifically about the use of antibiotics and antimicrobials in animal production.

Some consumer and advocacy groups are pushing for a ban on this practice, claiming that it can cause antibiotic resistance in humans who consume the animals. But research cited by food producers shows that the risk of human disease resulting from the practice may actually be lower than the risk to humans from suboptimal animal health that antibiotics could prevent.

Hoang said research has shown that lowering the incidence of food-animal illness reduces bacterial

contamination on meat that can cause food poisoning. According to U.S. Government Accountability Office research, there has been little decrease in antibiotic resistance in humans in Denmark as a result of a ban there on use of antibiotics in food animals.

As a result, the AVMA strongly supports the "judicious use of antibiotics in food-producing animals for treatment, control and prevention of animal diseases to promote food safety as well as assure the health and well-being of food-producing animals," Hoang said. "There is little to no evidence that restricting or eliminating the use of antimicrobials in food-producing animals would improve human health or reduce the risk of antimicrobial resistance to humans."

Attendees also discussed other issues for which they believe science should be the policy driver. For example, several states have discussed a requirement to label food products that may contain crops produced as a result of gene insertion. However, opponents of such labeling point out that genetically engineered (GE) products have been consumed in this country for more than 15 years. In addition, some 85 percent of corn and 91 percent of soybeans grown here are the product of gene insertion,



North Dakota Sen. Tim Flakoll, co-chair of the MLC Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee, heads up a discussion at the group's meeting in July.

and approximately 70 percent of processed foods contain ingredients from GE crops.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration requires labeling of GE foods only if the food has a significantly different nutritional property; includes an allergen that consumers would not expect to be present; or if a food contains a toxicant beyond acceptable limits.

Another issue, raised by Minnesota Sen. Doug Magnus, was the question of animal housing. Some groups are seeking bans on caging chickens or using gestation crates for sows, and some states have instituted this as policy.

A research summary by the Illinois Legislative Research Unit found that evidence does not support any specific type of sow housing as being more or less humane, with the actual management provided by the farmer being more important than the form of housing used. According to the AVMA, there is also no research that supports a ban of cages for laying chickens.

At the July meeting, the committee passed a resolution (later approved by the full MLC) encouraging the use of peer-reviewed, science-based research in the development of new laws and regulations.

Brief written by Carolyn Orr, CSG Midwest staff liaison to the Midwestern Legislative Conference Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee. She can be reached at corr@arl.us. The committee's co-chairs are Kansas Sen. Carolynn McGinn and North Dakota Sen. Tim Flakoll.

Midwest's lawmakers weigh in on U.S. trade, energy and farm policy

The Midwestern Legislative Conference adopted 11 policy resolutions in July during its Annual Meeting in Cleveland.

The resolutions process is led by a bipartisan committee of state legislators from the Midwest. Each resolution must also receive approval from legislators who attend the MLC Annual Meeting. The resolutions are designed to give the region and its states a voice on key federal legislation and programs, as well as to express the views of the MLC on key state policies.

The first resolution affirms the importance of open and reciprocal trade, and expresses concerns about the inclusion of "Buy American" provisions in federal legislation that could limit the U.S.-Canada trading relationship — the largest binational relationship in the world.

In a second resolution, the MLC affirms the role of The Council of State Governments as a leading advocate of federalism. The resolution urges the federal government to respect the limits on federal power prescribed in the U.S. Constitution, and encourages member states of the MLC to collaborate to protect the appropriate balance of powers between states and federal government.

The nine other resolutions address issues in energy, natural resources and agriculture policy.

Energy

- Support the development and expanded use of cellulosic ethanol.
- Urge the federal government to respect existing state renewable energy standards, and to avoid new laws or regulations that would prevent states from engaging in regional energy partnerships;
- Encourage the federal government to OK permitting for the Keystone XL pipeline, once the state of Nebraska has agreed to a new route for the pipeline;

Natural resources

- Improve management of the population of double-crested cormorants, which are adversely impacting fish populations in the Great Lakes and causing damage to trees and vegetation as well;
- Encourage optimal and sustainable timber management in the national forests, particularly those in the northern part of the Midwest.

Agriculture

- Urge the U.S. Congress to pass a new farm bill this year;
- Commend the U.S. Department of Labor for withdrawing proposed rules that would have changed child labor laws in agriculture;
- Urge the U.S. Department of Agriculture to issue horse processing regulations and provide inspection grants to companies that meet federal requirements; and
- Encourage policymakers to base agriculture-related regulations and legislation on peer-reviewed, science-based research.

The resolutions can be viewed in full at www.csgmidwest.org.

P-16 initiatives, other state-led partnerships hold key to higher-ed reform, MLC panelists say

When Nebraska began trying to improve cooperation among its universities, community colleges and K-12 schools, it needed to find someone to lead the effort.

University of Nebraska president James Milliken says there was one clear best choice to lead the new P-16 initiative — the state's governor. Milliken asked, and the governor agreed.

As a result, Gov. Dave Heineman is now heading up the Nebraska P-16 Initiative, which aims to improve student success rates at all levels, preschool ("P") through college ("16"). The statewide effort also involves key legislative and business leaders.

"We've got to have champions at the highest level," Milliken said to lawmakers during a session at this summer's Midwestern Legislative Conference Annual Meeting in Cleveland.

Nebraska's story reflects what is going on in states across the country — a recognition that more coordination among business leaders, lawmakers and educators at all levels is needed to ensure student preparedness for the 21st century workplace.

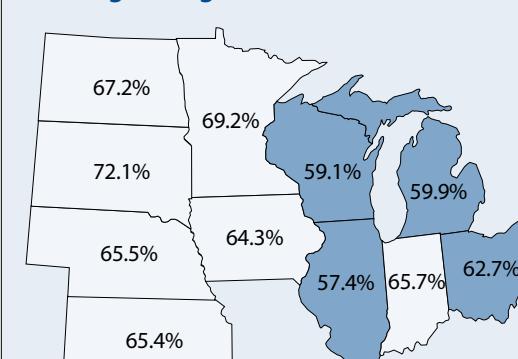
"We are in a new day, when partnerships are not only desirable, they are the coin of the realm," said Roy Church, president of Lorain County Community College in Ohio, who joined Milliken on the three-person MLC panel.

The session was titled "Reforming Higher Education for Global Competitiveness." But all three panelists noted that the success of a postsecondary system depends on the strength of a state's entire P-16 system: What happens in the earlier grades filters up to the colleges and universities.

"Over 50 percent of the students that come to us need to have some additional work before they're ready to enter college-level coursework," Church said. "... If we don't work at the K-12 level, we're never going to solve this readiness problem."

And readiness, Milliken said, must start at the

Estimated rate of state's 2007-08 high school graduates attending degree-granting institutions (2008)



Source: Digest of Education Statistics



James Milliken, president of the University of Nebraska (middle), addresses the Midwestern Legislative Conference during a session on higher education reform. Joining him on the panel were Blake Thompson of the Battelle Center for Science and Technology (left) and Lorain County Community College president Roy Church. The panel urged state leaders to foster more collaboration among educators and business leaders.

"P" stage of a state's system.

"Every state needs to be thinking about what it is doing to even the playing field for those youngest citizens that are going to enter our public school systems," he said.

Some of that thinking and strategizing is now being done through the P-16 initiatives up and running in Nebraska and other states.

"The more we talk about the need to integrate and have a smooth hand-off between K-12 and community colleges and universities, one of the things I think is absolutely critical ... is to have an effective P-16 program, or beyond a P-16 program, in your state," Milliken said.

Universities and community colleges also have to be willing to find new ways of reaching students, the panel said.

"I've noted a common thread among all those higher education relationships I get to see," said Blake Thompson, vice president of institutional affairs at the Battelle Center for Science and Technology Policy and Ohio State University.

"It's a willingness, I'd almost call it an aggressiveness, on behalf of higher education institutions to partner, to change the way they do business, interact, to build new programs that really train students in a new and different way."

The success of universities, Milliken said, should be measured by the value of the opportunities they are giving the state's young people.

"Universities need to think outwardly, and policymakers need to look to their higher education institutions and take full advantage of them," he said. "Demand their collaboration and partnership. Understand the public universities ... were created for the benefit of their states."

Article written by Jennifer Ginn, associate editor for The Council of State Governments. She can be reached at jginn@csg.org.

'Cradle to grave' skills development, stable business climate seen as keys to jobs growth

a quality early-childhood education system that is accessible to everyone, he said.

"It makes every subsequent investment in education more productive. If you taught a 4-year-old how to sit still and learn, then it's easier to teach a 5-year-old how to read."

Also needed, Wheelan said, are K-12 education reforms that improve student readiness for work and college, combined with a more dynamic community college system that is more responsive to current and future labor markets.

He added, too, that is time for the "Toyota of higher education, where somebody comes along and says we're going to provide all of the essentials at half the price."

Lastly, Wheelan encouraged state lawmakers to look to other nations, such as Germany and the Scandinavian countries, for ideas on how to revamp their job-training programs in ways that better serve older and displaced workers.

"We need a mechanism of getting older folks who have lost jobs back into the workforce," he said. "And the key to all of this is that it spans from someone who is 18 months old all the way up to people who are at the end of their working lives."

2) Establish a coherent policy on transportation investment

According to Wheelan, the Midwest has a "strong but deteriorating transportation network." Reinvesting in the network will help improve the

economic climate, but it must also be accompanied by a more systematic approach to how public dollars are spent: Set specific goals and measures, and finance projects based on those objectives.

The public has lost faith in its willingness to pay for infrastructure projects, Wheelan said, in part because it has lost faith in government's ability to spend wisely.

3) Create a simple, transparent tax and regulatory structure

Wheelan said business owners are less interested in "really, really low taxes," and more in being able to rely on a stable, manageable tax and regulatory structure.

"They're not asking for miracles," he said. "They understand that infrastructure and other things cost money, but they cannot tolerate a structure that is unpredictable from year to year."

4) Harmonize tax, regulatory structures

To the extent possible, Wheelan suggests that states look for ways to synchronize the way they

tax and regulate businesses.

"Because then, if you're a German company looking to make investments in the Midwest, you don't have to manage a corporate tax structure county by county, let alone state by state."

5) Create an economic brand for the Midwest, and sell it to the world

When China President Hu Jintao visited the United States in 2011, he visited two places, Washington, D.C., and Chicago, the latter because he considered it "the capital of the Midwest."

Wheelan told this story to underscore the potential power of the Midwest as an economic brand — a region that boasts a rich manufacturing heritage, arable land and a strong higher-education system.

Imagine a conversation, Wheelan said, among global business leaders who spoke of building new plants in South America, India or the Midwest.

"People would denote a certain set of characteristics with the Midwest."

The region, he said, would stack up quite well with the rest of the world. 

If the Midwest were a country ... Global rankings of gross domestic product (2011), \$ in millions

Country	GDP	Rank
United States	\$15,094,000	1
China	\$7,298,097	2
Japan	\$5,867,157	3
Germany	\$3,570,556	4
11-state Midwest	\$2,809,109	5
France	\$2,773,032	6
Brazil	\$2,476,652	7
United Kingdom	\$2,431,589	8
Italy	\$2,194,750	9
Russia	\$1,857,770	10

Sources: World Bank (global data) and U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis (data on state and regional GDP)

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Information exchange for legislators

At meeting in Cleveland, state leaders explore teacher-centered school reform, Lake Erie cleanup, mental health and criminal justice systems, and the attributes of quality public leadership

Education reform: Out with the old way of evaluating teachers, but new state systems far from complete

Almost every state has made changes over the past five years in how it evaluates its teachers, but which evaluation system is best remains an unanswered question.

"How do we incorporate student learning, student achievement, into teacher and leader evaluations in a way that's fair, that's reliable and that's actually going to improve practice?" asked Angela Minnici, deputy director of the National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality.

Minnici was a featured speaker at a session about teacher evaluations at the Midwestern Legislative Conference's 67th Annual Meeting in Cleveland.

In the past, Minnici told lawmakers taking part in the public policy roundtable, states emphasized the degrees and certifications a teacher had in order to ensure students were getting a high-quality education. It didn't work.

The new system, she said, includes "a robust and rigorous evaluation system that identifies the needs of teachers and leaders, and makes sure that those who don't belong in the profession — whether it's teaching or leading — are ushered out."

"The major focus is on improving everybody's skills in all phases of their career," Minnici said.

So how do you measure the success of teachers? Some states have been tying evaluations to the test scores of students on standardized achievement tests. But there are problems and limitations to that approach, Minnici said.

"Most teachers can't be captured under standardized tests because they teach in a subject area that doesn't have a standardized test ... [such as] your performing arts, your physical education, and then most of your high school subjects and your early elementary," she said.

"So it's usually somewhere between roughly 60 to 70 percent of our teachers [for whom] we don't have a valid and reliable measure."

She adds, too, that a test score "will only tell you so much."

"It often doesn't tell teachers or principals how to actually improve their practice," Minnici said. "They may know what they're doing isn't working, but they don't know how to change that. That is by far right now the biggest challenge across the states in trying to figure out how to include student achievement in teacher evaluation systems."

Another component of recent state reforms is finding better ways of evaluating school leaders.

"You need principals and superintendents that are on the ground, getting it done and not sitting in their offices," North Dakota Senate Majority Leader Rich Wardner, a former teacher, said during the MLC session. "It's like coaching an athletic team. You've got to be actively involved."

While there is no one magic bullet for how to

Overview of teacher evaluation policies in the states (as of October 2011)		
Measure/state policy	# of U.S. states	States in Midwest
Policy changes made between 2009 and 2011	33	IL, IN, MI, MN, OH, SD, WI
Requires annual evaluations for all teachers	25	IN, MN, ND, OH
Evaluations must include objective evidence of student learning	24	IL, IN, MI, MN, OH
Evaluations must be "significantly informed" by student achievement/growth	18	IL, IN, MI, MN, OH
Student achievement/growth is preponderant criterion in teacher evaluations	13	MI, OH
Teachers must be eligible for dismissal based on evaluation results	20	IL, IN, MI

Source: National Council on Teacher Quality, "States of the States: Teacher Evaluation — October 2011"

ensure there are effective teachers and principals in schools, Minnici said, policymakers need to keep their eye on the bigger picture.

"One of the challenges for states and districts is to think about how do we integrate all these reforms to provide a cohesive and coherent approach to teacher effectiveness," she said. "... We have to be able to think about how to bring that together and what kinds of supports do all teachers and leaders need to be successful in making sure their students are college and career ready." 

Article written by Jennifer Ginn, associate editor for The Council of State Governments. She can be reached at jginn@csg.org.

Great Lakes protection: Ohio putting more resources into curbing rise of harmful algal blooms in Lake Erie

Since 1969, when one of Lake Erie's tributaries — the Cuyahoga River — caught fire, the lake has stood as a symbol of the need for environmental protection and also the tangible results that can come from pollution reduction efforts.

In the aftermath of the fire, the passage of the Clean Water Act and establishment of the binational Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement ushered in a period of 25 years during which Lake Erie's health steadily improved.

But according to Jeffrey Reutter, director of the Ohio Sea Grant College Program and Ohio State's Stone Laboratory, the lake's ecosystem has been on the decline since 1995, with significant implications for the coastal economy in Ohio.

Lake Erie is the shallowest of the five Great

Lakes and, in terms of the surrounding land use, has more cropland, more residential land and the least forestland.

These factors compromise water quality in the "Walleye Capital of the World." Lake Erie is the most valuable freshwater commercial fishery in the world and is ranked globally as a top-10 sports fishing location. Annually, the seven counties that make up the state's Lake Erie shoreline generate \$10 billion in tourism revenue, representing one-quarter of all of Ohio's tourism dollars.

All this might be threatened, however, by worsening conditions in the lake.

On Saturday, July 14, Reutter spoke at the annual meeting of the Great Lakes Legislative Caucus about the challenges facing Lake Erie.

Topping the list is the occurrence of toxic, harmful algal blooms in the lake's western basin. The blooms result from too many nutrients making their way into the lake from runoff and from untreated sewage overflowing from systems that combine stormwater and sewage treatment.

On July 13, caucus members had a chance to see firsthand some of the projects that the Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District is undertaking to reduce the incidence of combined sewer overflows in the Cleveland area.

While these measures will help, two-thirds of the phosphorus entering the lake comes from runoff from farmland, particularly along the Maumee River in western Ohio, which drains 4.5 million acres of agricultural land.

On July 18, three agencies in Ohio launched the "Ohio Clean Lakes Initiative," which relies on voluntary measures by farmers to adopt fertilizer application practices to reduce the runoff of phosphorus into the state's waterways.

"We've got a huge harmful algal bloom — capable of producing toxins — covering the water intakes for 2.8 million people."

Jeffrey Reutter, director, Ohio Sea Grant College Program

According to a joint press release issued by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, the Ohio Department of Agriculture and the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency, the "4R Nutrient Stewardship Program" advocated under the initiative "promotes using the right fertilizer source, at the right rate, at the right time, with the

REVIEW OF SELECT MLC SESSIONS

right placement."

Improving the timing of fertilizer application and the incorporation of fertilizer into the soil layer has been shown to reduce dissolved phosphorus runoff into waterways.

Reutter recommends a two-thirds reduction in dissolved phosphorus loading across the board to prevent harmful algal blooms like the record-setting number of blooms observed last year. In his 42 years of experience with Lake Erie, Reutter told the caucus, he had never seen anything like the 2011 bloom.

"We've got a huge harmful algal bloom — capable of producing toxins — covering the water intakes for 2.8 million people," he said. "When you hit this bloom with a boat, it slows you down." 

Article written by senior policy analyst Lisa Janairo, who heads up CSG Midwest's staffing of the Great Lakes Legislative Caucus. Lisa can be reached at ljanairo@csg.org. The caucus met July 13-14 in conjunction with the Midwestern Legislative Conference Annual Meeting. Minnesota Sen. Ann Rest serves as caucus chair.



Renowned author and journalist Evan Thomas closes the MLC Annual Meeting with a speech exploring the qualities of effective public leadership. Drawing on the research and writing he has done on some of the most important U.S. leaders of the 20th century, Thomas talked about the importance of finding the right balance between pride and humility.

"He knows 70 percent of the people are going to die, and he made it his business to go out and talk to [the troops], to look them in the eye before sending them to die," Thomas said.

Today, the nation is in need of political leaders with Ike's same sense of humility, honesty and responsibility, Thomas said, because one consequence of the "affirmation culture" has been a rise in the notion of individual entitlement.

"The country is caught in an uneasy time realizing that we've been living beyond our means for a long time," Thomas said.

"We've borrowed too much, we've charged too much, we're realizing there's no free lunch. There is a recognition that we've been living too large that clashes with this idea of entitlement, that we deserve things."

Political leaders can help, he said, by reintroducing a word once commonly used in the public square, but now rarely if ever uttered — "sacrifice."

"It is very, very tough in national politics, and maybe state politics as well, to say to voters, 'You're going to have to give something up.'"

But Thomas believes constituents may be looking to their humble public servants to lead the way.

"I can't help but think that if you are actually honest with the public, that you explain to constituents as things actually are, they will listen and might even respect it." 

Article written by Tim Anderson, publications manager for CSG Midwest. He can be reached at tanderson@csg.org.

Evan Thomas: Nation needs doses of humility, responsibility and honesty, and political leaders could provide them

Legislators face a constant balancing act in their jobs inside state capitols — between competing interests, policy goals and time commitments.

But there also is an internal balance that all of us face, Evan Thomas said during a speech to lawmakers that closed this year's MLC Annual Meeting, and it is one particularly essential for state and national political leaders to get right.

"Be proud," he said, "but don't be too proud."

A good dose of humility makes for an effective public leader, but it is also a trait increasingly at odds with what Thomas says is a culture of "self-esteem and affirmation" that began in the 1960s and has deepened in ensuing decades.

"Overconfidence is baked into our culture," said Thomas, noting, as an example, that the only area where U.S. students rank above all their global peers is on measures of self-confidence.

What the nation could use more of, Thomas said, are politicians that display the kind of quiet self-confidence typified by one of the 20th century's most beloved and respected leaders: Dwight Eisenhower.

Thomas, former *Newsweek* editor-at-large who has written a series of acclaimed books on key leaders and moments in U.S. history, just completed a book on Eisenhower.

"He worked with big egos ... but he was always the low-key guy," Thomas told the Midwestern Legislative Conference.

Others would bluster, engage in heated rhetoric and get caught in pointless political bickering; President Eisenhower never got sucked in.

"He was deeply nonpartisan, which would drive Richard Nixon [his vice president] crazy," Thomas said. "... He kept his eyes on the big items, on what really mattered. He had a deep sense of responsibility."

That came in part from his military background. Eisenhower ordered the D-Day invasion and was prepared to take full responsibility for its failure, and also made a point of meeting face-to-face with the troops who would make the ultimate sacrifice in support of the mission.

This high rate of recidivism stresses state correctional systems and causes costs to skyrocket.

"If we can identify 'high utilizers' of the system and quickly wrap our arms around them with treatment, supervision and case management, we can intercept people before they are using the expensive services," said Fader-Towe, who, along with her CSG Justice Center colleagues, works with states to close the "revolving door" in their correctional systems.

States are best served, she added, by allocating resources toward people with the highest risk of recidivism. One way to identify these individuals is by assessing their "criminogenic risk" — factors such as lack of education, substance abuse, family discord and criminal history.

Michigan Sen. Bruce Caswell knows all too well the costs in his state of mental illness in the correctional system. His state spends \$34,000 per prisoner in a given year. Multiply that by 40,000 inmates, and the state is spending "too much of the general fund" on corrections, he said.

"We give [inmates] two weeks of medication and say, 'Good luck,'" Caswell said. "And we wonder why they are re-offending."

During the roundtable discussion, Caswell shared one successful initiative in Michigan — a program that assigns a "coach" to mentally ill inmates upon their release. The coaches follow up with these individuals for three to four months, making sure they have their medications and have found work.

"Almost no one in this program went back [to prison]," Caswell said. "The savings more than paid for the costs."

North Dakota Sen. Tim Mathern discussed a county-based program from his state that hired mental health professionals to assess offenders in jail. If certain mental health disorders were detected, individuals received services instead of being charged.

South Dakota Sen. Craig Tieszen, a former law enforcement officer, pointed out, too, that the availability of these services can shape judicial decisions.

"Judges are responsible for public and community safety," he said. "If they are less comfortable with the mental health services available, they are going to take the safe route and put [offenders] in jail."

Policymakers can help, he said, by allowing judges to "operate outside the box" when imposing sentences.

Fader-Towe agreed: "Treating all offenders in the same way, without identifying their criminogenic risk, hampers your ability to reduce recidivism." 

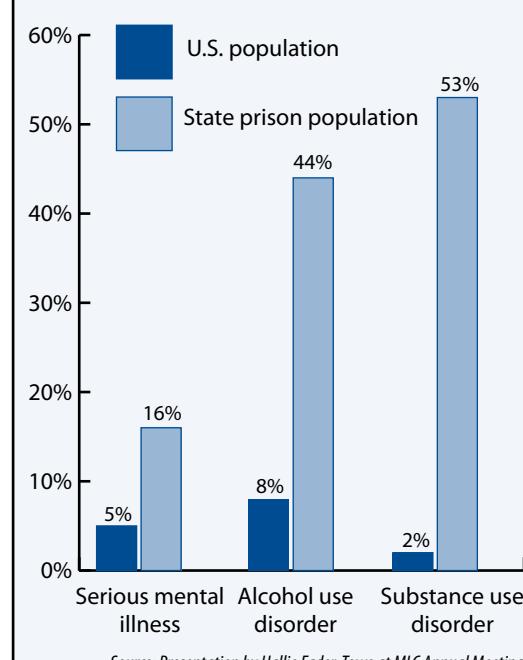
Article written by Kate Tormey, policy analyst/assistant editor for CSG Midwest. She can be reached at ktormey@csg.org.

Policymakers share ideas on how to reduce recidivism by better addressing mental health issues of offenders

While 5 percent of the general U.S. population is affected by a serious mental illness, the rate in state prisons is much higher: 24 percent among females and 16 percent among males.

More than half the time, these illnesses occur in conjunction with substance abuse — a combination that, when left untreated, can lead to an increased risk of recidivism, according to Hallie Fader-Towe, a program director at The Council of State Governments' Justice Center. She led a discussion on mental health and the criminal justice system at the Midwestern Legislative Conference Annual Meeting in July.

Prevalence of mental illness and substance abuse disorders





Minnesota Rep. Alice Hausman

Veteran lawmaker from St. Paul focuses efforts on strengthening state's infrastructure to boost economic competitiveness

by Kathryn Tormey (ktormey@csg.org)

When Alice Hausman leaves the Minnesota Legislature someday, she hopes that her legacy will be one of doing the right thing for all of the state's citizens.

Throughout the state, and particularly in the city she represents — St. Paul — it will be easy to recall her service because of all the amenities that are present because of her work.

She is particularly proud of her role in helping expand the public mass transit system in the Twin Cities, improving trails and parks, and supporting the development of Como Park, a zoo and conservatory in Minnesota's capital city.

"There are huge pieces of it that I personally authored and fought hard for, and now millions of kids use that," says Hausman, a Democrat, who is a 22-year veteran of the Minnesota House.

All of those projects reflect Hausman's interest in infrastructure, a policy area that she says allows her to serve not only her own constituents, but the state as a whole.

And it's because of her passion for her work, and her colleagues' trust in her leadership abilities, that she has been a key leader in making decisions about the state's future — previously as chair of the House Capital Investment Committee and now as its ranking minority member.

"When you are spending taxpayer dollars, everyone all over the state has to be able to look at that final product and say it is fair to everyone," she says. "There's the temptation to be parochial, but that never gets your leadership role trusted and respected by everybody. If people can count on the fact that you will reach out and work with everyone, there is trust."

For example, Hausman was recently honored by Audubon for her longtime support of wetlands restoration — despite the fact that her urban district doesn't have any wetlands in it.

"Particularly as we deal with flooding, wetlands restoration is one of those things we have to do to hold down the cost to taxpayers," she says. "I can trust that even though I am not building infrastructure in my district, my constituents know it is the right thing to do."

Hausman says trust, among her constituents and legislative colleagues, is critical to legislative success. And she points to another essential character trait of policymakers: tenacity.

"It's about simply not giving up and not letting obstacles get in the way or be excuses," she says.

Last month, CSG Midwest talked with Hausman,

who currently is first vice chair of the Midwestern Legislative Conference and is in line to become chair in 2013. Here are some excerpts from the interview.

Q: You have said that when you are considering an infrastructure bill, you always think about the long-term economic benefit of a bonding bill. Why?

A: If we write the bill correctly, we should be able to say that every line in that bonding bill builds the economy for the future. We need to ask ourselves, "What infrastructure needs to be in place in order for the economy to thrive?"

I always give a few examples of that. There is a dairy company in Litchfield, Minnesota, that wanted to expand, but the size of the wastewater system was keeping it from expanding. So in the bonding bill, we provided funding to enlarge that system. ... Because the state partnered with Litchfield for its wastewater infrastructure, the dairy company could expand and have an impact not only on Litchfield, but on the state economy.

In Winona, we made a small investment in the port; the following year, the tonnage moving through that port doubled. There are a lot of businesses on land that grow to support that.

The final example is Thief River Falls, in northern Minnesota, where there is a company called Digi-

Key. ... It is nationally and internationally competitive because it can promise to get its product to the customer very quickly. But every morning, the company had to defrost the plane because it was frozen. [Company officials] also showed me the machine that clears off the runway; it was so ice-packed they had to thaw that out in the morning before they could function.

So we built an airplane hangar at the airport. That allowed them to not have to thaw out all of the

equipment in the morning, and thus we helped that company in its competitive environment because we put some public infrastructure in place. The company added 200 employees.

Q: Despite your current focus on transportation and infrastructure, your educational and professional background is in education and health care. You've said that health care is going to be one of the top issues facing the states in the coming years. Why?

A: It is one of the issues in both the state and nation that is really going to affect us economically, and it has to do with our competitiveness. Every other industrialized country can figure out how to get everyone covered at half the cost.

We have to have a different model. I think [we need to] move away from a model [of employer-provided health insurance]. Auto manufacturers in the United States cannot be competitive with auto manufacturers in Canada because they have to add \$1,600 to the cost of every car for employee health care. So they are at a competitive disadvantage. I think in some ways the best thing we could do for small businesses is to take that burden off of them.

In terms of the discussion on the Affordable Care Act and those states that say they are not going to participate, I would argue that they are doing the taxpayers in their state [a disservice] to pay for the most expensive health care that is available. If people aren't covered, they are going to go to the emergency room ... and that is the most expensive care you can provide. Ultimately everyone is going to pay for that. It is in our best interests and in the best interests of taxpayers to make sure that's not the default health care system for part of our population. ...

We have to figure out a way of allowing multiple entities to test reforms. It ought to be easier to test them on the local level. You might as well test them, because in the case of health care, it has got to cost less. It is simply the fact. If there is a model out there that delivers better outcomes at some reduced cost, you ought to let somebody try it.

Q: When you look back at your career so far, is there a particular moment or piece of legislation that makes you proud to be serving in your office?

A: I first experienced this in our special session, and then I had the good fortune to experience it again in this session. Because I work on bonding and because we require a supermajority — we require 81 votes out of 134 to pass the bonding bill — the majority really needs the minority. In the special session, I was the only House Democrat invited into the room to help write the bill, and we sat in a room during special session, Republicans and Democrats, House and Senate, and the governor's office, and we wrote the bill together. We negotiated and we wrote the bill together.

When it was done, it was a wonderful product and it got a strong bipartisan vote. When I tell that story, people always look at me and say, "Why don't we read about this in the paper?" It surprises them that it happened that way. The public wishes that is how we did all of our work. The public really believes that the product would be better if we figured out how to work across party and jurisdictional lines. There is an increasing frustration and cynicism as a result of what the public could see as gridlock. We have to demonstrate that we can work in a different way. When we work across those boundaries, there will always be pieces that we disagree with — but the point is that something gets done with bipartisan support. ...

People sometimes ask whether I like my job or if it's fun, and I always smile and say, "It is not the process that is fun." Sometimes going to work in the legislative process feels a little like going banging your head against the wall, but when everything goes right, you can do an enormous amount of good. 



A powerful constitutional tool

Amendment proposal under Article V of U.S. Constitution would give state legislatures say in controlling federal debt

by North Dakota Sen. Curtis Olafson (colafson@nd.gov)

For the last year, it has been my privilege to serve as the national spokesman for the National Debt Relief Amendment (NDRA).

The NDRA is a state-initiated, nonpartisan effort invoking the rights of state legislatures to propose and ratify amendments to the U.S. Constitution using the process our Founding Fathers wisely provided in Article V of the Constitution.

This experience has led me to conclude that we who serve as state legislators should fully understand the powerful tool we have at our disposal in Article V. If we are to restore and preserve our great republic, we must be willing to use it.

The NDRA is a simple 18-word amendment that is easy to understand. As I travel the country and visit with citizens and state legislators, I have found that our challenge lies not with convincing people to like the amendment. The challenge is to overcome the fact that a majority of state legislators are unfamiliar with the amendment process.

Concerns based on fear, not fact

That unfamiliarity prompts concerns that are founded in fear of the unknown, and not in fact. Once people understand the state-initiated amendment process, their concerns are resolved and their fears are allayed.

Under Article V, there are two methods by which an amendment can be proposed for state ratification: Either Congress can propose an amendment by a two-thirds vote of both chambers, or two-thirds of the state legislatures (currently 34) can join together in making “application” to Congress to issue a call for a time and a place for a convention of the states.

If the convention comes to an agreement (and it has no obligation to do so), Congress must specify that ratification be decided either directly by the state legislatures or by popular conventions within each state as regulated by state law. (All of the amendments added to date except one have been ratified by the state legislatures.)

Whether amendments are proposed by Congress or by an amendments convention, three-fourths of the states must ratify the proposed amendment(s) before it can become part of our Constitution.

Other than the limited powers given to Congress to call for the place and date of a convention and to choose one of two ratification methods, the states control the process and decide the outcome. The Supreme Court, the president and state governors play no role in the application process or in convention deliberations.

Thus, the only authority in our republic that has the power to both propose and ratify amendments is the several states. The Founding Fathers did not give that power to Congress, the Supreme Court or to governors. They intended that the amendments-

The only authority in our republic that has the power to both propose and ratify amendments is the several states.

convention process would provide a check and balance whenever federal power was misused.

I believe that our Founding Fathers intended that we, as state legislators, would not only understand that we have the right to use Article V, but moreover, that we have a duty to do so when we see serious challenges facing our nation that are not being solved by our federal government.

The most common concern legislators have is that the convention will “run away” — and in the most extreme scenario, rewrite the entire Constitution. This has been repeated so often that it has achieved “urban legend” status and become accepted as true, even though it has no basis in fact or historical perspective.

Constitutional scholars such as Rob Natelson of the Independence Institute and Nick Dranias of the Goldwater Institute, who have studied the process thoroughly, have published research that convincingly debunks these myths. Some of their work on Article V can be found on our website at www.restoringfreedom.org and elsewhere.

There are multiple layers of protection in the Article V process that make it politically impossible for a convention to “run away” or to propose extreme or radical amendments. Those who preach fear about the process pose what they claim are “unanswerable questions,” all of which can readily be answered.

The best example is their question of who will choose the convention delegates. The answer is that delegates are chosen in the manner the state legislatures direct — not by Congress, not by the president, and not by nefarious bogeymen the scare-mongers conjure up to paralyze legislators into inaction.

The ultimate protection built into the Article V process is the high hurdle for ratification. Unless

and until 38 states ratify a proposed amendment, the Constitution remains unchanged.

If our Founding Fathers could stand before state legislators today, I believe they would demand to know why we are not using the constitutional tool they provided for us. The NDRA is by no means the only good idea that could be advanced using Article V. There are others. Winston Churchill said, “I never worry about action, but only inaction.”

The time for action is now. A runaway amendments convention is a myth. A runaway \$16 trillion federal debt is a reality. 

Sen. Curtis Olafson, a Republican from Edinburg, was first elected to the North Dakota Senate in 2006.

7 Table Topics featured at meeting

At the Midwestern Legislative Conference Annual Meeting, Sen. Olafson led a Table Topic breakfast discussion on Article V. Initiated and led by legislators, Table Topics are an opportunity to discuss issues of interest in an informal setting.

Seven Table Topic discussions were held at the meeting. The other six were as follows:

- South Dakota Rep. H. Paul Dennert on agricultural land taxation;
- Indiana Rep. Jud McMillin on state entitlement reform;
- Illinois Rep. Norine Hammond on the conversion of non-recycled plastics into fuel;
- Indiana Rep. Ed Soliday on the future of state transportation infrastructures; and
- South Dakota Sen. Frank Kloucek on two issues, horse processing and the future of cellulosic ethanol.

This FirstPerson page is designed to be a forum for legislators and constitutional officers. The opinions expressed on this page do not reflect those of The Council of State Governments or the Midwestern Legislative Conference. For more information, or to make a submission, contact Tim Anderson at 630.925.1922 or tanderson@csg.org.

Policymakers gather to discuss key policy issues at MLC Annual Meeting; agenda focused on economic reinvention

When Midwestern policymakers gathered in July for the 2012 Midwestern Legislative Conference Annual Meeting, discussion centered on economic reinvention — strategies for states to boost their economies and foster job growth.

Members of the Ohio General Assembly served as hosts of the four-day event of the MLC, a non-partisan association that cultivates collaboration and information sharing among state and provincial legislators. Ohio House Minority Leader Armond

Other plenary sessions focused on ways to reform higher education (see page 4) and strengthen infrastructure to boost economic competitiveness.

The business agenda also included presentations by legendary political satirist P.J. O'Rourke and political strategists Donna Brazile and Rich Galen.

Close to 500 people took part in this year's meeting. In addition to hearing from top speakers, attendees also had the chance to attend small-group discussions to share ideas on some of the common

"[The] MLC [Annual Meeting] is an excellent opportunity to be informed on the latest issues affecting the Midwestern states and to meet and interact with other legislators."

South Dakota Rep. Frank Kloucek

Budish, MLC 2012 chair, led the host state's efforts.

Throughout the meeting, attendees heard from expert speakers and attended discussions on different ways states can retool their economies. This year's keynote address, for example, was given by Charles Wheelan, an economics professor and former Midwest correspondent for *The Economist* (see cover story for more on Wheelan's speech).

policy challenges facing Midwestern states and provinces.

"[The] MLC [Annual Meeting] is an excellent opportunity to be informed on the latest issues affecting the Midwestern states and to meet and interact with other legislators," says South Dakota Rep. Frank Kloucek.

Iowa Rep. Todd Taylor agrees, saying the

conference is "a great opportunity to meet and learn more about my office from others in the Midwest who are confronted with some of the same issues as I am."

It is also an opportunity for lawmakers to reflect on leadership.

Two veteran Midwestern legislators, Ohio Rep. Ted Celeste and Iowa Rep. J. Scott Raecker, led a professional-development session on civility in the legislative arena. And author Evan Thomas closed this year's conference with a session on the importance of humility in public service (see page 7).

The MLC approved 11 policy resolutions (see page 4 for more information) and elected the newest member of its leadership team. North Dakota Sen. Tim Flakoll will serve as the MLC's second vice chair in 2013 and is in line to become chair in 2015.

Next year's MLC Annual Meeting will be held July 14-17 in St. Paul, Minn. Incoming MLC chair Rep. Alice Hausman will lead her host state's efforts.



North Dakota Sen. Tim Flakoll, newest MLC officer

Photos from the 2012 MLC Annual Meeting



Ohio House Minority Leader Armond Budish (right), chair of the MLC, presides over this summer's MLC Annual Meeting. He was joined by legislative colleagues from around the region, including Nebraska Sen. Beau McCoy (left), who is second vice chair of the MLC.



Legislators hear presentations on the fiscal condition of the states and key budget challenges during the Fiscal Leaders Roundtable. From left: North Dakota Senate Majority Leader Rich Wardner and Ohio Reps. Mike Foley, Vernon Sykes and Tracy Maxwell Heard.



Legislators talk between sessions at the MLC Annual Meeting. From left: Ohio Sen. Cliff Hite, Iowa Rep. Todd Taylor and Indiana Rep. Ed Cleere.



Political strategists Rich Galen and Donna Brazile offer a preview of this year's elections.



Ohio Rep. Ted Celeste asks a question during one of the plenary sessions.



Iowa Sen. Wally Horn (left) and Wayne Elhard, a member of the Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly, take part in the MLC Executive Committee meeting.

The Council of State Governments was founded in 1933 as a national, nonpartisan organization to assist and advance state government. The headquarters office, in Lexington, Ky., is responsible for a variety of national programs and services, including research, reference publications, innovations transfer, suggested state legislation and interstate consulting services. The Midwestern Office supports several groups of state officials, including the Midwestern Legislative Conference, an association of all legislators in 11 states: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota and Wisconsin. The Canadian provinces of Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario and Saskatchewan are MLC affiliate members.

Great Lakes Legislative Caucus meets to discuss key water issues in the region

Lawmakers from Great Lakes states and provinces gathered in Cleveland recently to discuss key issues facing the lakes and share ideas on policies to protect them.

The meeting of the Great Lakes Legislative Caucus, held July 13 and 14 in Cleveland, featured expert speakers on a variety of topics. The caucus is a nonpartisan group of state and provincial lawmakers from eight U.S. states (Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin) and two Canadian provinces (Ontario and Quebec). Minnesota Sen. Ann Rest is its chair.



GREAT LAKES LEGISLATIVE CAUCUS

Issues discussed at the July meeting included the future of federal investments in Great Lakes restoration, state initiatives in Ohio and Pennsylvania to protect Lake Erie from harmful algal blooms, ongoing efforts to prevent the introduction of Asian carp into the lakes and a look at the greatest threats to the Great Lakes.

During the caucus's business session, members adopted rules of organization. Next year, the caucus will hold its annual meeting in Minnesota; Quebec will host the 2014 meeting.

This fall, the caucus will resume its "Great Lakes, Great Webinars" series; the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement and the impacts of



Michigan Sen. Rebekah Warren and Wisconsin Rep. Jeff Stone take part in the July meeting of the Great Lakes Legislative Caucus.



Minnesota Sen. Ann Rest is chair of the Great Lakes Legislative Caucus, which met this summer in Cleveland.

fracking and sand mining on water quality will be among the topics discussed.

For more information, please visit www.greatlakeslegislators.org or contact Lisa Janairo (ljanairo@csg.org or 920.458.5910). CSG Midwest provides staffing services for the caucus.

MLC Executive Committee to meet at CSG National Conference in Austin, Texas

The Midwestern Legislative Conference Executive Committee will meet later this year in conjunction with The Council of State Governments' national annual meeting in Austin, Texas.

The committee serves as the governing body of the MLC, a nonpartisan, non-profit association of lawmakers in 11 U.S. states and four Canadian provinces. It is made up of appointed representatives from each state legislative chamber in the region. Members also include past MLC leaders and chairs of the five policy committees.

The Executive Committee typically meets each summer in conjunction with the MLC Annual Meeting and again later in the year during CSG's National Conference, which will run this year from Nov. 30-Dec. 3.

In Austin, the group will consider MLC business, and Minnesota Rep. Alice Hausman will

take over as chair. Ohio House Minority Leader Armond Budish is the current chair.

As part of her leadership duties in 2013, Hausman will preside over the MLC Annual Meeting in St. Paul, which will be held July 14-17.

During the national conference, CSG's committees and task forces will host policy sessions on education, energy and environment, health and transportation.

This year's national conference will also feature a special policy academy on diabetes.

A preliminary agenda and registration for the meeting are available online at www.csg.org. Discounted registration and hotel rooms are available until Oct. 19.

For more information, please contact CSG's national office at 800.800.1910 or e-mail Kelley Arnold at karnold@csg.org.



CALENDAR

UPCOMING MIDWESTERN LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE AND COUNCIL OF STATE GOVERNMENTS EVENTS

HENRY TOLL FELLOWS LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

September 8-13, 2012
Lexington, Kentucky

Contact: Krista Rinehart (krinehart@csg.org)
859.244.8249
www.csg.org/LeadershipCenter/default.aspx

MIDWESTERN LEGISLATIVE SERVICE AGENCY/RESEARCH DIRECTORS GROUP MEETING

September 26-27, 2012
Chicago, Illinois

Contact: Cindy Andrews (candrews@csg.org)
630.925.1922
www.csगmidwest.org/LSA/default.aspx

THE COUNCIL OF STATE GOVERNMENTS 2012 NATIONAL CONFERENCE

November 30-December 3, 2012
Austin, Texas

Contact: Kelley Arnold (karnold@csg.org)
800.800.1910
www.csg.org/events

68TH ANNUAL MEETING OF THE MIDWESTERN LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE

July 14-17, 2013
St. Paul, Minnesota

Contact: Gail Meyer (gmeyer@csg.org)
630.925.1922
www.csगmidwest.org

19TH ANNUAL BOWHAY INSTITUTE FOR LEGISLATIVE LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT (BILLD)

August 9-13, 2013
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CAPITOL CLIPS

Wisconsin officials say new flexible degree will transform higher ed

Starting as soon as this fall, the University of **Wisconsin** plans to begin offering courses through a new model of higher education that leaders say will transform the state's postsecondary system.

Students will be able to take online classes anytime and learn at their own pace — with credits earned based on competency rather than seat time. The new competency-based model, state educators say, will allow students to move more quickly toward degree completion, saving them both time and money.

In announcing the UW Flexible Degree program, Gov. Scott Walker said new delivery models in higher education are needed to close Wisconsin's skills gap: Individuals are having a hard time finding work, while employers are struggling to find qualified workers. More than 20 percent of Wisconsin's adult population has some higher education credits, but no degree, the governor's office notes.

According to *Insider Higher Ed*, a handful of other states, including **Indiana**, have been offering competency-based programs through a partnership with Western Governors University. In contrast, the Wisconsin program will be overseen by UW and employ university faculty and staff.

Midwestern states step up efforts to stop human trafficking

Over the past year, in nearly every Midwestern state, legislatures have passed new laws to address the problem of human trafficking.

According to the Polaris Project — an organization that works to combat trafficking and modern-day slavery around the globe — legislative actions have taken several forms, such as:

- cracking down on individuals who, through force, coercion or fraud, compel others to engage in criminal sex acts (sex trafficking) or to provide labor or other services (labor trafficking);
- requiring the forfeiture of assets by traffickers and giving new training and tools to investigators (wiretapping authority, for example); and
- providing assistance for victims and passing Safe Harbor laws that grant immunity for sex-trafficked individuals under the age of 18.

Polaris ranks five Midwestern states as having among the strongest anti-trafficking laws in the nation: **Illinois, Indiana, Minnesota, Nebraska and Ohio**. In all five states, bills were signed into law this year, most recently HB 5278 in Illinois and HB 262 in Ohio. In contrast, South Dakota was listed among Polaris' "faltering four" states for having done little to combat trafficking. More information on state laws is available at www.polarisproject.org.

Protecting workers' privacy aim of Illinois' new "Facebook law"

Illinois lawmakers have added a layer of privacy protection for workers by forbidding employers from requesting information that would give them access to an individual's social-networking account.

Dubbed the "Facebook law," and signed into law in August, HB 3782 also applies to prospective employers and job candidates. It takes effect in January.

According to the Illinois governor's office, the law's definition of social networking sites does not include e-mail, and HB 3782 does not prevent employers from obtaining information in the public domain about current or prospective workers. The public posts of workers are not protected under the new law, the *Chicago Tribune* reports.

However, gaining access to an individual's user name and password could give employers access to content that a job candidate or worker wants to be private — age or sexual orientation, for example. The new law forbids employers from basing hiring and firing decisions on information in private social network accounts. Illinois is the first state in the Midwest, and second in the country (Maryland was first), to pass such a law.

Election Day becoming 'Election Weeks' with rise in early voting

Election Day is officially Nov. 6, but if recent trends are any indication, a large number of voters will be casting ballots weeks in advance.

During the last presidential election, 30 percent of voters cast their ballots early — by far the largest percentage in modern history, according to professor Michael McDonald of the United States Election Project. He says the dramatic rise in early voting is due in large part to changes in state laws: allowing "no excuse" absentee voting, encouraging vote-by-mail, and opening special polling places for people to vote early.

In the Midwest, most states now allow individuals to vote early in person (by casting regular or absentee ballots). **Michigan** is the only state in this region that does not provide some form of in-person early voting. It, along with **Indiana** and **Minnesota**, also requires an excuse for voting by mail with an absentee ballot.

Early-voting periods begin as early as 40 days prior to the election (**Iowa**) and generally last at least two or three weeks. In the Midwest, an early-voting period most commonly runs up until Election Day. However, it ends three days prior to Election Day in **Illinois**. As the result of recent legislative actions, the same is now true in **Ohio** — though an exception is made for military voters and select others. The **Ohio** law, and the exceptions in it, became the subject of a lawsuit filed in July by the Obama campaign.

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